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PEN American Center

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FAX SENT

November 29, 1990

The Honorable James A. Baker III
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary of State Baker:

On behalf of the more than 2,500 writers who are members of PEN American Center, we write to voice our dismay about reports of your upcoming talks with China's Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. Recent articles in the New York Times suggest your government has invited the Chinese official to discuss American policy in the Persian Gulf -- more specifically to elicit Chinese support for a United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq in exchange for improved relations between the two countries. We fear that this normalization of ties would entail the lifting of U.S. sanctions against China and a curtailing of U.S. criticism of the human rights abuses committed by the Chinese government.

In light of reports detailing the Chinese government's continued crackdown on dissidents and its harsh treatment of those involved in last year's pro-democracy movement, overtures by your government to China seem particularly troubling. We are enclosing an appeal sent today by PEN to Prime Minister Li Peng on behalf of journalists Chen Ziming and Wang Juntao who were charged last week with "plotting to overthrow the government" and "spreading counter-revolutionary propaganda" based upon their active involvement in the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations. According to our information, these charges could carry the death sentence. It appears that Mr. Chen and Mr. Juntao are being punished for exercising their internationally recognized right to free expression.

We ask that you intervene on the two journalists' behalf in your upcoming meeting with Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. We, furthermore, request that you impress upon the Chinese government that any normalization of the official and economic ties between the United States and China must be preceded by an improvement in the Chinese government's questionable human rights record. Otherwise, it would appear that in its eagerness to pursue its Gulf policy, the U.S. administration is all too willing to sacrifice legitimate human rights concerns.

United States Department of State
Office of E.O. Privacy & Classification Review
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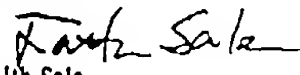
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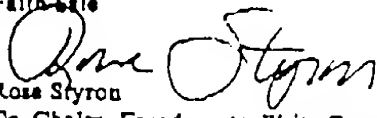
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We hope you give this matter serious consideration and look forward to your comments.

Sincerely,


Larry McMurtry
President


Faith Sale


Rose Styron
Co-Chairs, Freedom-to-Write Committee